

DATE ISSUED: October 2, 2000

REPORT NO: 00-199

ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee
Agenda of October 4, 2000

SUBJECT: Community Service Center Program Update

SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

BACKGROUND

In December 1994, the Mayor announced the creation of the Renaissance Commission and the Renaissance Project, a long term effort designed to make San Diego a city of truly liveable neighborhoods. The Commission, a panel of business and community leaders, was charged with the mission to reach out to the communities to determine what was needed to help make all of our neighborhoods healthy and liveable. Meetings were held throughout the City of San Diego with input received from a diverse cross-section of citizens from various communities. Out of these meetings, the Renaissance Commission developed five core themes. One of these themes was to “restore public trust through accountable city government and improve access to government services and information. Decentralize the delivery of services by redesigning and expanding the use of Community Service Centers throughout the City.”

In 1996, City Council approved the establishment of the Community Service Center Program (CSC) with twenty-two distinct community areas. Between 1997 through 1999, four existing Neighborhood Service Center in Rancho Bernardo, Otay Mesa/Nestor, Chollas View and Mid-City joined six new facilities in Clairemont, San Ysidro, Peninsula, Golden Hill, Navajo, and College to become Community Service Centers. The Year 2000 has resulted in five additional Centers being opened: Carmel Valley; Central (next to Police Substation on Commercial Street); North Park; Scripps Ranch; and Tierrasanta.

DISCUSSION

The City's vision of a Community Service Center is... "A Place Where Neighbors and the City Share Information and Service to Enhance the Community's Quality of Life." Community Service Centers serve as a hub of community involvement where City services and other public resources are made more accessible to residents and neighborhood groups. Their goal is to serve as a "one-stop shop" for many City services. In turn, community groups and residents can use the Centers to gain information; have an accessible point of contact to bring forth issues and concerns needed to be address by City departments; use the public access computer workstation to view the City's Web page; and use the community meeting rooms. Each Community Service Center provides a variety of core City services. To also recognize the uniqueness of the neighborhoods, each individual Center partners with other community organizations and non-profit agencies to provide more comprehensive services specific to that community.

Each full-service Center has a Manager who serves as a management level City team member to coordinate and oversee the activities of the Center. In addition, the Center Manager serves as a liaison between City departments and the community, provides insight and feedback to the Mayor and City Council on community issues; and is encouraged to be proactive and non-traditional in approaching solutions to community concerns and issues. Each Manager also retains their position from their sponsoring department and brings those duties and responsibilities to the Center. For example, two Center Managers from the Planning and Development Review Department also serve as planners for the areas around their assigned Centers. The idea to use existing City staff as Center Managers was a core theme by the Renaissance Commission to decentralize City services with existing resources.

A full-time Customer Service Specialist is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Center, answering phones and assisting customers over the counter. These individuals are highly customer service-oriented and serve as "goodwill ambassadors" in the communities. Feedback on customer surveys indicate that clients are very satisfied with the customer service levels provided by the Center teams. The Specialist positions are funded through CDBG grants, general fund and other City department sponsorships.

Phasing Plan

The Community Service Center Program was designed to phase in new Centers over a period of time based upon budget allocations. The original proposal for a fully-phased Program would result in twenty-two Centers located throughout the City. Phase I was completed with the establishment of four Community Service Centers in the areas of Rancho Bernardo, Otay Mesa/Nestor, Market Street, and Mid-City. Phase II was completed with the addition of Clairemont, San Ysidro, Peninsula, Golden Hill and Navajo. Implementation of Phase III was approved by the Mayor and City Council on July 26, 1999. This established three new Centers in Scripps Ranch, Carmel Valley and North Park. In addition, the new Central CSC opened as a part of the new Central Area Police Substation complex in Logan Heights and Tierrasanta was approved as part of fiscal year 2001 budget deliberations. Council District 7 also provides separate CDBG funding for a Community Service Center in the College/Rolando area.

Phase IV and V consists of implementing the remaining Centers. The following neighborhood clusters have been proposed and with future Council direction and funding, Centers could be opened to serve these communities:

- a. University City/La Jolla/La Jolla Village
- b. Linda Vista/Morena/Mission Valley West
- c. Pacific Beach/Mission Beach
- d. Kearny Mesa/Tierrasanta
- e. Park West/Gaslamp/Balboa Park/Marina/Harborview/Cortez/Core-Columbia/Horton Plaza/Centre City East
- f. Skyline/Lomita/North Bay Terraces/South Bay Terraces/Paradise Hills/Jamacha
- g. Mission Hills/University Heights/Hillcrest/Midtown/Old Town
- h. El Cerrito/Rolando/Oak Park/Webster/Darnall/Gateway
- i. Serra Mesa/Birdland/Mission Valley East

Decentralization

A task force of key City management was formed in May 2000 to explore the different City programs and services to make recommendations to the City Manager regarding a decentralization plan for services that would greater serve the public by being offered in the communities. As a result, additional services will be added and more services decentralized to the Centers.

A marketing campaign was implemented within the City organization and across the City at large to “advertise” the Program, the location of the Centers, and the many services that are provided. A variety of mediums are used to reach a broader audience...the average citizen who might not regularly be “tuned in” to a formal community group. New services are being offered - Passport Application Services and Notary Services - to bring in new customers and additional revenue to the City. Within the city organization, there has been an effort to re-educate City employees about the Centers and how they can be used in their own department outreach efforts. As a result, the Program has seen an increase of 25-40% in transactions and revenues across the Program when comparing last year’s first six months to this calendar year.

The Future

This Program is on the horizon of expanding in many different ways..in its marketing and outreach to all citizens, by increasing the types of City services offered, and further developing relationships within the community as not only a source of information, but to truly make a difference in communities in which the Centers are located. It is important to build on its successes, and be flexible and creative in the ways City services are delivered to the public.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Rimes
Community Service Center Program Manager

George I. Loveland
Assistant City Manager

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